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ABSTRACT

This report describes the development of programs for preschool children in Colorado through the cooperative efforts of public education, public and private community resources, and the Colorado Legislature. Sections of the report discuss service delivery models, program collaboration, identification and assessment of children and their families, demographic information on children and families, educational programs, family involvement, and program evaluation. A summary and statement of conclusions are followed by lists of benefits and needs of the Colorado Preschool Project. Recommendations for program continuation and expansion are offered. (RH)

COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Progress Report: Year 1

A Report to the Colorado General Assembly

Piton Foundation
Clayton Foundation
Colorado Department of Education

July 1989

COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROJECT

PROGRESS REPORT: YEAR 1

A Report to the Colorado General Assembly

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June 1989

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Citizens of Colorado:

It is my pleasure to present the first report on the progress of the **Colorado Preschool Project**. This project was authorized in 1988 by the Colorado General Assembly for the purpose of creating services for 2,000 four and five year olds in need of language development. With this legislation Colorado is recognizing that we have families with children in our communities who can benefit from early childhood care and education.

The **Colorado Preschool Project** reflects the rich diversity of our state. Local early childhood specialists representing Headstart, the private sector and local districts from all parts of our state responded to the challenge of developing high quality services for both child and family. The children in the program represent 27 different language groups. The programs range from serving three children in a small mountain town to over 300 in an inner city setting. Colorado can feel proud of its response to these families and children.

I would like to express my appreciation to the **Clayton Foundation** for their leadership and generous support of the teachers involved in this project. A special thank you to the **Piton Foundation** for providing valuable resources for the evaluation. Thank you to the University of **Colorado at Boulder** for collecting the information contained in this report. This public/private partnership has added significantly to the quality of the project and also expressed the depth of commitment of Colorado to its children.

William T. Randall, Commissioner of Education
State of Colorado

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report documents an important milestone in the education of young children in Colorado. It describes the development of programs for preschool children through the cooperative efforts of public education, public and private community resources, and the Colorado Legislature. This report is made possible by the support of many people and agencies.

Thanks go to the Piton Foundation for funding this effort and a subsequent evaluation which will follow. Particular recognition should go to Mary Gittings and Elaine Berman at Piton who continue in their active support to make this a success. Thanks also to Adele Phelan, President of the Clayton Foundation, for her support in carrying this project forward.

Special mention also goes to David Smith and Wayne Martin at the Colorado Department of Education, who assisted in the guidelines and design of the total evaluation plan. Commissioner of Education William Randall has also been extremely supportive in making this program review process possible.

Finally, thanks go to the INREAL Outreach Education Center, the contractor for the report, and its staff who always went the extra mile to assure high quality information. Drs. Elizabeth Heublein and Rebecca Edmiaston provided excellent leadership to this project.

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated
to Colorado's young children,
their families,
their teachers,
and the legislators
who serve them.

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INTRODUCTION

The number of students placed at risk of educational failure has been steadily increasing (National Institute of Health, 1989). Current statistics indicate that 25% of Colorado students entering high school will drop out. In recent years national attention has focused upon the effectiveness of early childhood education in preventing later educational and social problems of at-risk children. Research clearly documents wide-ranging benefits to these children and their families. In the Perry Preschool Study, a well-known investigation into the efficacy of early childhood education, 123 children with below average IQ's were followed from ages three through eighteen. The results showed that these children graduated from high school and went on to jobs and higher education programs at twice the rate of children without preschool experiences (Schweinhart & Wiekert, 1981).

After reviewing national studies, the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families reported that preschool education increases school success, employability, and reduces dependence on social welfare programs. Committee members found that for every $1.00 spent on preschool education, $4.75 can be saved in later social costs.

During the crucial years of preschool, children gain the essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions critical to later school success. Communication skills developed during this time of life are the foundation for successful learning. However, in Colorado substantial numbers of children enter kindergarten and the primary grades with inadequate language skills (School Finance Act, 1988). Weakness in language skills is related to school failure and is characteristic of students who fail to complete high school.

Project Background

In 1988 the Colorado General Assembly passed legislation to fund the Colorado Preschool Program for Language Development. The program is designed to 1) identify four-and five-year old children who need assistance in language development and who would benefit from participation in a preschool program for language development; 2) establish criteria to be followed by school districts in establishing preschool programs for language development; and 3) encourage parents to participate in the district preschool programs. By January, 1989, the Colorado Department of Education authorized 33 school districts to initiate pilot preschool programs (see Figure 1).

Although funds were appropriated for public schools to implement programs, monies were not provided to evaluate these programs. To assure the development of quality early childhood education, the Clayton Foundation and the Colorado Department of Education formed a partnership with the Piton Foundation to conduct a three-phase survey of the Colorado Preschool Project. During Phase I a progress report was provided on the results of the first six months of the program. A design for state-wide evaluation and accountability will be developed during Phase II. During Phase III staff at each local site will conduct evaluation activities.

This Phase I progress report covers the time period from the start of the program in January, 1989, through May, 1989. All information in this report is based on data supplied by the preschool project sites. Any differences in total figures are due to attrition of children over the six month period.

The Progress Report Design

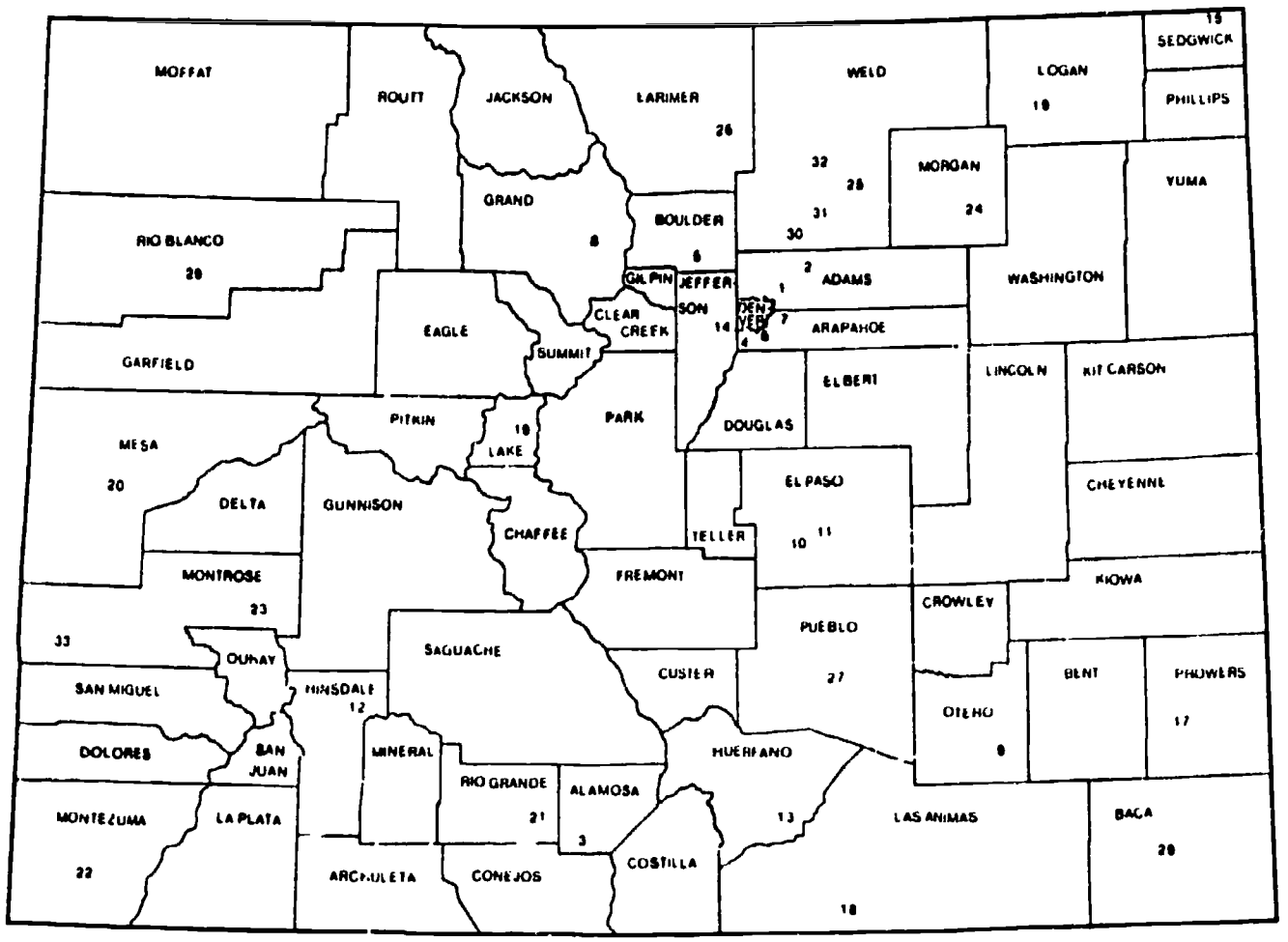
This is a progress report of the pilot programs in the 33 school districts. The progress report team was composed of personnel from the Colorado Department of Education, Clayton Foundation, and the INREAL Outreach Education Center, University of Colorado, Boulder. This team reviewed data gathered by staff at local sites. These data included a child/family assessment survey form on each child enrolled in the program, a site information sheet, and a staff/volunteer information sheet for each staff member of project volunteer.

Team members visited 28 of the sites to conduct a group interview with the project administrator, teacher(s), paraprofessionals and two parents. The interview format was shared with participants prior to the site visit and was followed during the interview process. A group interview was also conducted with the 5 remaining sites through conference calls. (All forms used in Phase I are available upon request.) The remainder of this report will include the findings generated by these data. Specifically, the following areas were examined:

1. Service Delivery Models
2. Program Collaboration
3. Identification/Assessment of Children and Families
4. Demographic Information: Child and Family
5. Description of Educational Programs
6. Family Involvement
7. Program Evaluation

FIGURE 1

COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROJECT DISTRICTS



SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Within the 33 districts participating in the Colorado Preschool Project, 100 preschool classrooms served 1,985 children (Table 1). Legislation granted school districts the option of sole provision of the preschool program or of contracting, whole or in part, with Head Start agencies or with one or more child care agencies. Districts shared generously with other agencies to establish these programs. A variety of models were established to provide educational services for the children and families. Approximately 25% of the 100 classrooms were provided by private preschools. School districts and Head Start agencies furnished the remainder. Provision of the preschool programs was not a solitary effort. Table 2 delineates four service delivery models created by the 33 districts.

Nearly half (48%) the preschool programs were established by local school districts (Model A). Agency interaction in providing direct service was limited under this model. Collaboration in this model between regular education and special services was present in only three of the 16 programs. In these three the preschool children were integrated into existing regular preschool programs where personnel worked cooperatively to provide service to all children. Information gathered during the on-site interview suggests that increased integration of programs will occur in the fall of 1989.

Agency cooperation was more often seen in other models of service delivery. Model B, collaboration between school districts and local Head Start agencies, was adopted by more than a quarter of the sites (27%). Four districts used Model C, contracting not only with Head Start, but with private preschools/private day care. These contractual relationships indicate that agencies are working together to provide service to children and families.

Model D represents a variety of innovative cooperative approaches which were used by the remaining four districts. In one district, proposals were solicited from preschool programs throughout the community. The district then selected nine nonprofit preschools into which the project preschool children were placed. Two districts contracted with laboratory schools operated by university/junior college programs to serve the children and families. Both of these sites were mainstreamed programs. In another situation, the school district provided facilities, materials, and speech/language therapists and an educational service unit provided teachers and paraprofessionals.

TABLE 1

Program Enrollment by District

District	Program Enrollment	Service Delivery Model
Adams County District 14 (Commerce City)	84	B
• Adams-Weld District 27-J (Brighton)	30	A
• Alamosa District Re-11J	30	A
Arapahoe District 2 (Sheridan)	15	B
Boulder Valley District Re-2	78	D
Cherry Creek District 5	23	D
Denver Public Schools	346	C
• East Grand District 2 (Granby)	2	A
• East Otero District R-1 (La Junta)	50	D
El Paso District 11 (Colorado Springs)	60	A
Harrison District 2 (Colorado Springs)	60	B
• Hinsdale County District Re-1 (Lake City)	4	A
• Huerfano District Re-1 (Walsenburg)	30	A
Jefferson County Public Schools	211	A
• Julesburg District Re-1	8	A
• Lake County District R-1 (Leadville)	45	C
• Lamar District Re-2	39	C
• Las Animas District 1 (Trinidad)	45	B
• Logan County Valley District Re-1 (Sterling)	18	D
Mesa County Valley District 51 (Grand Junction)	112	A
• Monte Vista District C-8	15	A
• Montezuma-Cortez District District Re-1	30	B
• Montrose District Re-1J	32	A
• Morgan District Re-3 (Fort Morgan)	20	B
• Platte Valley District Re-7 (Kersey)	13	B
• Poudre District R-1 (Fort Collins)	15	A
Pueblo District 60	252	B
• Rio Blanco BOCES	19	A
• Springfield District Re-4	42	A
• Weld County District Re-8 (Fort Lupton)	53	A
• Weld County District Re-1 (Gilcrest)	45	B
Weld County District 6 (Greeley)	150	C
• West End District Re-2 (Naturita)	9	A
TOTAL	1985	

• Rural District

TABLE 2

Service Delivery Models

	MODEL A: School District	MODEL B: School District contracted with Head Start	MODEL C: School District contracted with Head Start and Private Preschool/ Day Care	MODEL D: Contracted with Multiple Agencies
Number of Districts	16	9	4	4
Percent of Districts	48 %	27 %	12 %	12 %

The numbers and kind of cooperative agreements between and among agencies was likely limited by the fact that the programs have been in operation for only six months. An increase in the number of collaborative service models will probably be seen within the next year.

PROGRAM COLLABORATION

Interagency collaboration is important because the families in this population require a variety of services. In order to provide needed services without duplication, careful coordination is necessary. In this survey interagency relationships were examined. The following areas delineate the degree and type of collaborations occurring within the local programs: a) advisory council functions, and b) interagency relationships.

Advisory Council

Legislation requires each school district to establish an advisory council comprised of representatives from a variety of county and local agencies involved in services to children and families. The function of the group is to assist with implementation of the program and to facilitate the coordination of services. Three-fourths of the districts have formalized advisory councils, although attendance was

sporadic and some met only once. In the remaining districts, advisory councils are in the process of being developed.

Once again, the time was a constraining factor in the formation of the advisory councils. In addition, there was an element of misjudgment in the selection of council members; many of those invited were directors of organizations with their time already overcommitted. As a result, they could not attend the meetings regularly. In addition, there was a lack of awareness of the existence of advisory councils by those directly involved in providing services, such as teachers.

Interagency Relationships

Regardless of the limited functioning of the advisory councils, involvement was established with county departments of health, migratory services, job placement services, and training services. City and county library staffs' involvement were lauded by numerous sites. Librarians visited schools, supplied classrooms with books, and encouraged parents to become regular users of the library services. In contrast, county departments of social services were identified by one-third to one-half of the sites as least involved in preschool programs. Interview participants attributed lack of involvement of personnel from social services to issues such as confidentiality of child/family information and delegation of responsibility for service delivery.

The involvement of public and private community resources is important to the success of preschool programs. Community physicians, Head Start agencies, community center boards, private preschools, and day care facilities actively referred children to the project. Community helpers from the police and fire departments visited classrooms and invited programs to tour their facilities. McDonald's provided family incentives at several sites. Adult education groups offered parenting classes, and in some cases, free tuition at community colleges. High schools provided classroom volunteers. In some sites, local colleges/universities assisted in identification of children for the program and in the development of educational programs for parents.

The involvement of a variety of agencies, community resources, and businesses with the preschools is proving to be a challenge across programs. Although initial linkages have been forged, much work remains to be accomplished.

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Given the brief period between program funding and program start-up, school districts were limited in their opportunity to notify local communities of the program. In spite of time restrictions, all programs were advertised in local newspapers, and/or on radio and television stations. In retrospect, districts did not feel that these means of communication were the most effective. Outreach efforts that elicited the most referrals were: 1) flyers placed in strategic community locations such as grocery stores, laundromats, etc., 2) letters sent home with students in the elementary school in order to reach younger siblings, and 3) referral or waiting-lists from Head Start and Child Find. Many people reported that the most effective public relations came from parents telling other parents; this was particularly helpful in reaching minority families.

Outreach efforts were successful in that not only were authorized slots filled, but additional children were identified who might be served if there were more space available. As one person shared, "There is a need for more children to be served. Lots of families in our community are requesting that more children be allowed in the program." In spite of the neediness of the children and families served during the pilot period, a number of teachers, administrators, and parents expressed concern that the limited outreach efforts did not reach those most in need.

Eligibility Criteria

In all districts, those interviewed expressed discomfort regarding the criteria for program eligibility. Although personnel appreciated the flexibility allowed in determining eligibility and do not want to lose this flexibility, they would appreciate clearer guidelines from the Colorado Department of Education.

Districts used multiple criteria to determine program eligibility. Common criteria taken into consideration include:

1. Age of Child: Legislation clearly states that the preschool program is to serve four- and five-year old children who are eligible to enroll in kindergarten in the following year.

2. Exclusion factor: Any child qualifying for similar district services under other programs would continue to be eligible only for the other services and would be funded under such programs.

3. Language Skills: Children must display needs in the area of language development. This need was determined primarily through the administration of an instrument which indicated delays in the children's language ranging from 10% to 70%.

4. Family Risk Factors: A number of risk factors relating to the family were considered. The following were the most frequently listed: a) parents/siblings with low educational achievement and/or no high school diploma, b) primary language spoken in the home is not English, c) single-parent family, d) teenage mother, e) low socioeconomic status, f) parents who have been identified as chemical or substance abusers, and g) child from a deprived or isolated environment. Additional factors considered in some programs were chronic health problems, history of developmental delays in the family (particularly parents), children with no previous preschool experience, and children from transient families.

Screening/Identification

Admission into preschool was determined through a screening of child and family needs. Parents were typically asked to complete an intake application form and a home screening questionnaire or interview. The child was administered a test of language skills.

In most programs the intake form was an application/enrollment form for the program. In addition to general information on the child/family, questions concerning the child's developmental history and health history were asked. The intake application included questions concerning family risk factors; however, many programs get this type of information through a parent interview or by having the parent complete a questionnaire. Although information about families is critical to the assessment process, consideration must be given to family privacy. Since family involvement is a primary goal of the project, preschool personnel do not want to alienate parents or violate their trust. In the fall, several programs intend to add some type of assessment of family needs. A variety of assessment instruments are being administered by programs to determine the childrens' needs and skills. The Miller Assessment for Preschoolers-screen (MAP) was used in about half the districts. Other widely used tools were the Preschool Language Scale and the DIAL-R. As stated earlier, programs are concerned about identifying assessment measures/procedures that will best identify these preschool children. Assessment tools will be a focus of evaluation plans. In Phase II of the evaluation, the selection of assessment tools and the training of district personnel in the

administration of these instruments will be priorities.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: CHILD AND FAMILY

Children

Demographic information was received on 1,750 (88%) of the 1,926 children who are currently enrolled in the project. Twenty-six percent were from rural communities, while 74% lived in urban communities. The children, on the average, will be five and a half years old when they begin kindergarten this fall. There were more males than females (54% were males). This moderate gender imbalance may have occurred for two reasons: 1) more boys than girls have language difficulties at this age, and 2) in the general population there are more boys than girls of this age.

The ethnic background of the children being served was quite diverse as shown in Figure 2. Overall, about half of the children were White (51%), more than one-third were Hispanic, and 8% were Black. The ethnic composition, however, varied among individual programs.

In Figure 2, the ethnic composition is given for rural and urban programs. About half the children in both rural and urban programs were from minority families. In rural areas, all but eight minority children were Hispanic. The minority sample was far more diverse in urban areas with greater numbers of Black, Asian, Native American, Southeast Asian, and other ethnic minorities.

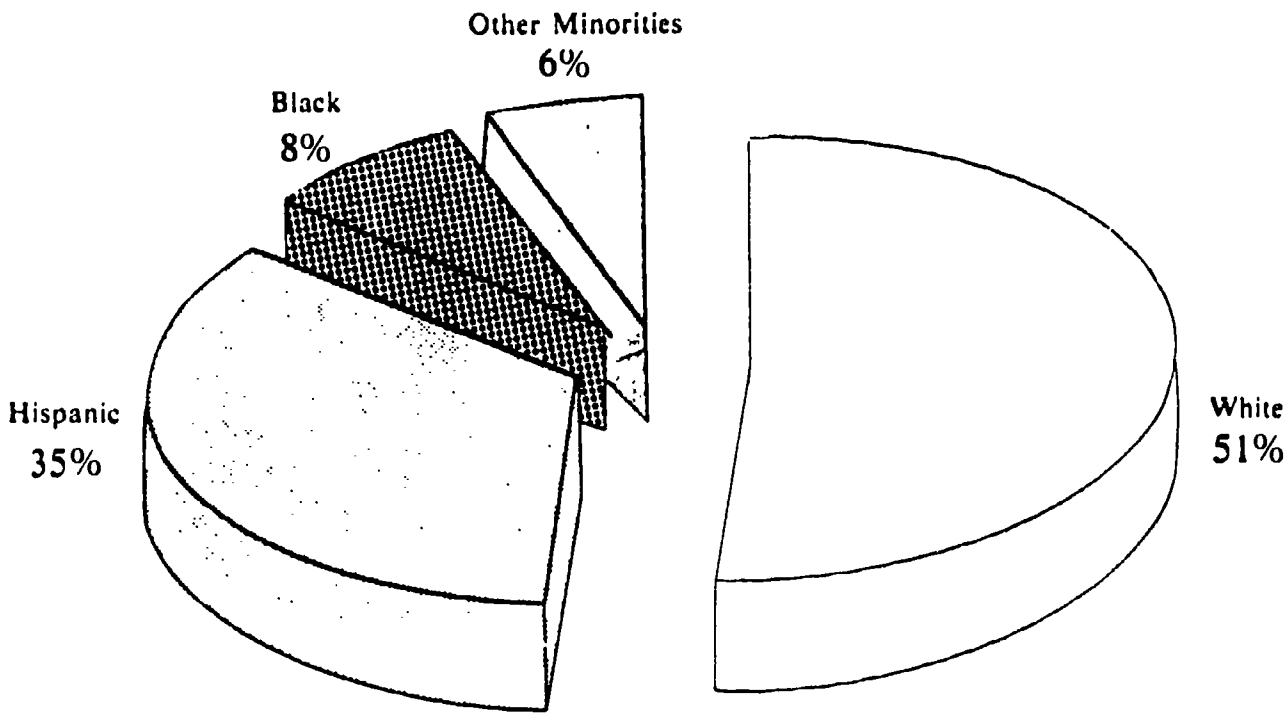
Less than one-third (31%) of the children had attended preschool prior to this program. On the average the children spent twelve hours a week in the preschool project in 1989; one in four were also in day-care programs an average of 25 hours a week.

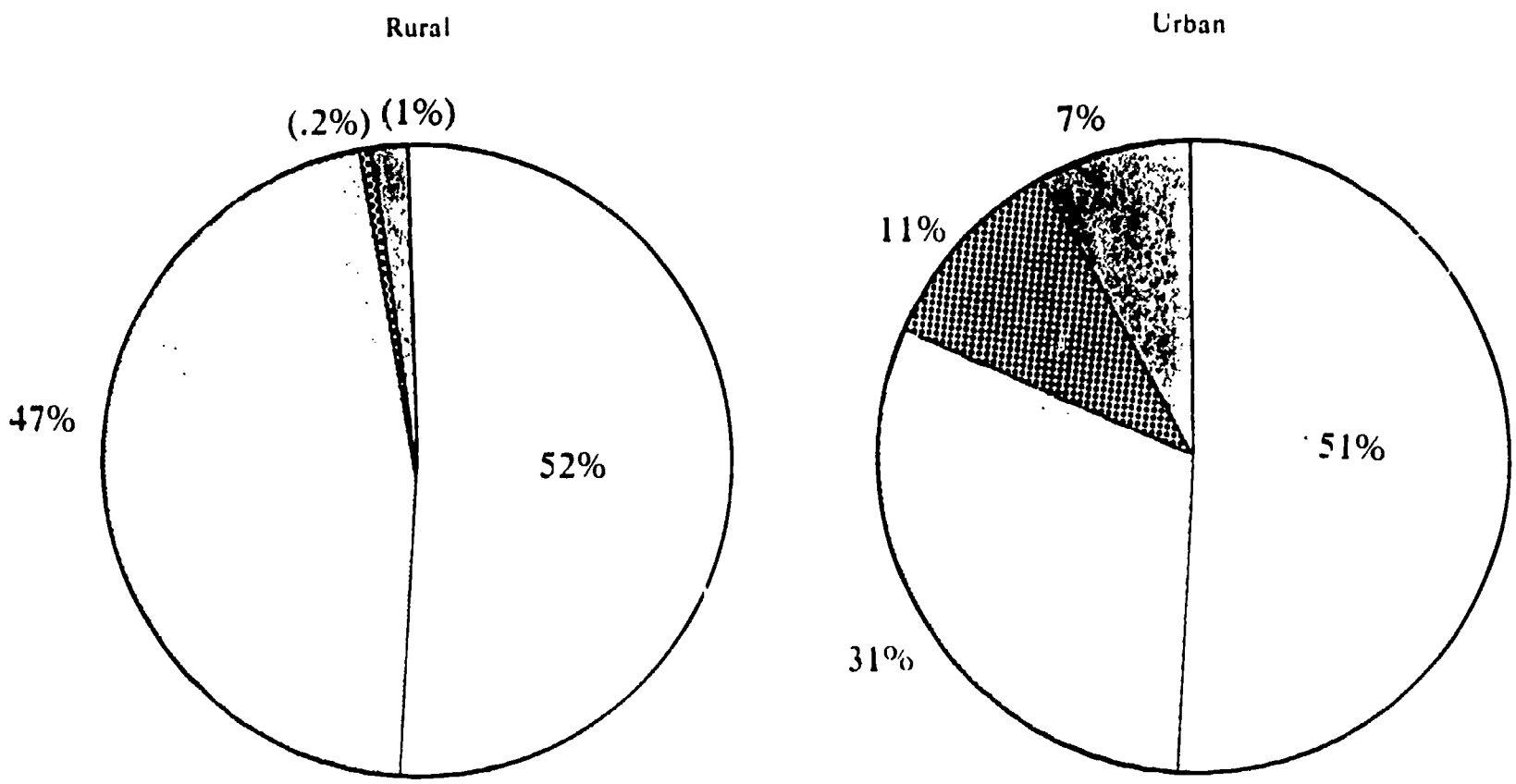
Families

Recent research has indicated certain predictors that can be identified with students placed at risk of educational failure. Factors that place families at risk include: 1) racial or ethnic minority status, 2) non-English speaking home, 3) school dropouts in family, 4) frequent family moves, and 5) frequent school changes (California DOE, 1986). Many of these risk characteristics were present in the families served by the

FIGURE 2

ETHNICITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
TOTAL SAMPLE





preschool programs and were used as entrance criteria.

According to this survey, the majority of the children (72%) were living in two-adult households, typically with parents or step-parents. One in four of the children, however, was living in households with only one adult. In most cases (96%) the adult in these households was the single-parent mother of the child; the remaining one-parent households had single-parent fathers (N-14) or female relatives (N=3) of the child. Families with children in the Colorado Preschool Project were larger than average. According to the 1980 Colorado census, the average number of persons per family is 3.19. Nearly half (47%) of the children in the program were from families of five or more people.

On the average, mothers of the children were 30 years old and have a high school education. Nearly one in four (24%) of the mothers, however, had less than a high school education (Figure 3). An estimated two in five mothers were teenagers when their oldest child was born.

Adult males in the home were, on the average, 33 years old and had a high school education. Nearly one in five (19%), however, had less than 12 years of schooling; fifty-seven of the adult males had completed less than 7 years of schooling Figure 3).

Education levels of parents of the preschool children who did not complete high school were examined for the various ethnic groups and are also shown in Figure 3. These findings, which show Hispanics tend to have less education than other parents, reflect the dropout statistics for Hispanics in Colorado.

More than two-thirds of the families had annual incomes of less than $20,000. Income was reported by income ranges as follows: 39% less than $12,000; 28% between $12,000 and $20,000; 24% between $20,001 and $35,000; and 9% more than $35,000 (Figure 4).

A study of the survey data for the 151 children and their families in the highest income category showed that most of these children were in at least one of the following situations:

1. Foster homes or in the care of relatives other than the parents (N=25).
2. Language minority or bilingual homes (N=18).
3. Ethnic minority families (N=43).

FIGURE 3

PERCENT OF CPP PARENTS HAVING LESS THAN 12 YEARS OF FORMAL EDUCATION
(by Ethnicity and Gender)

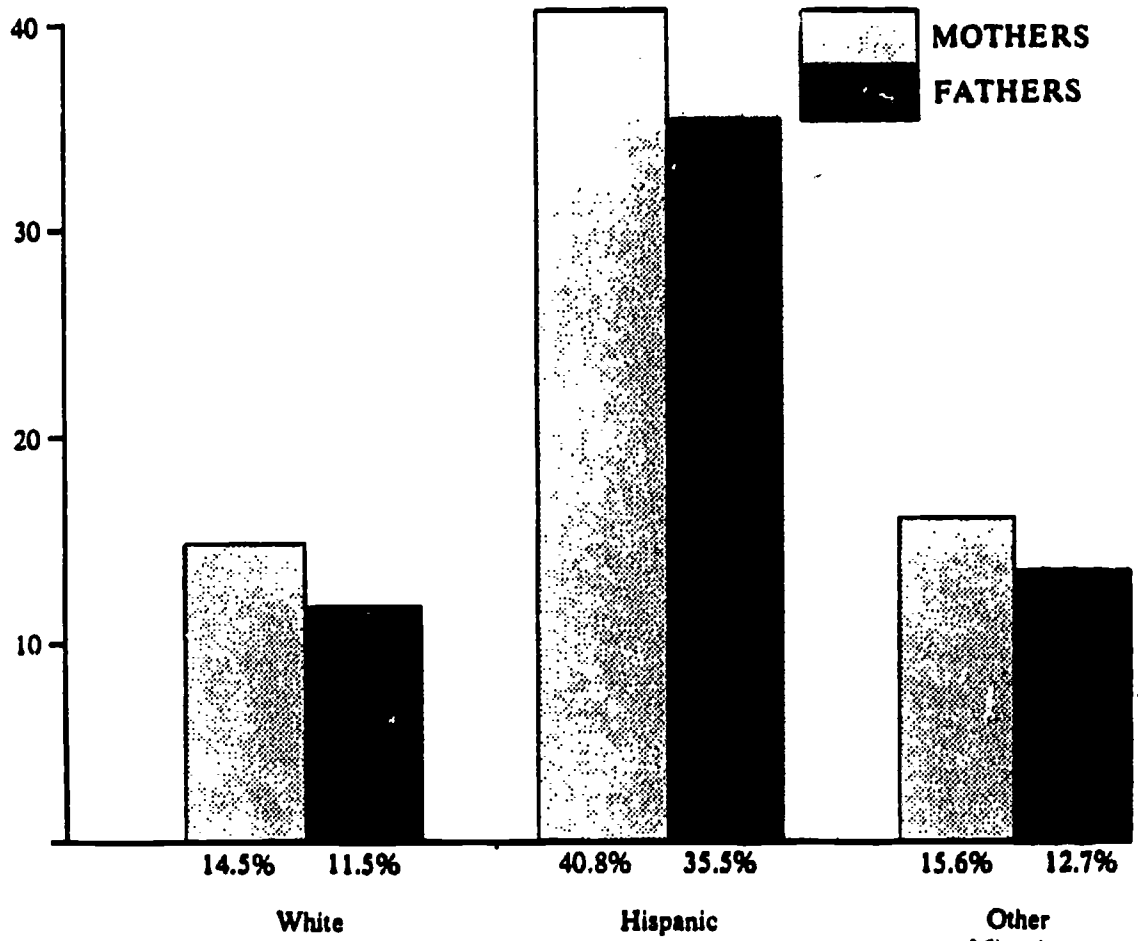
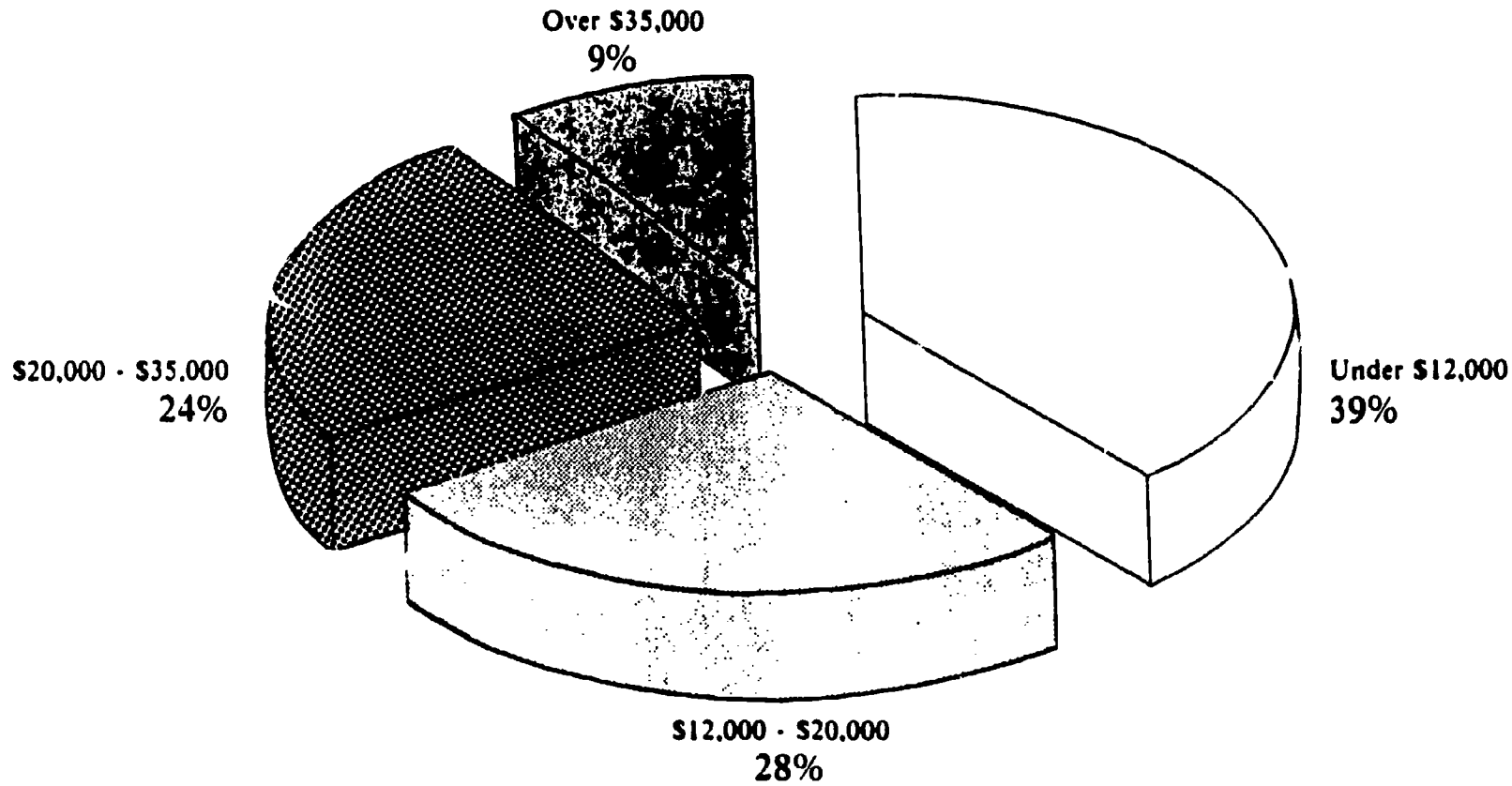


FIGURE 4

TOTAL FAMILY INCOME

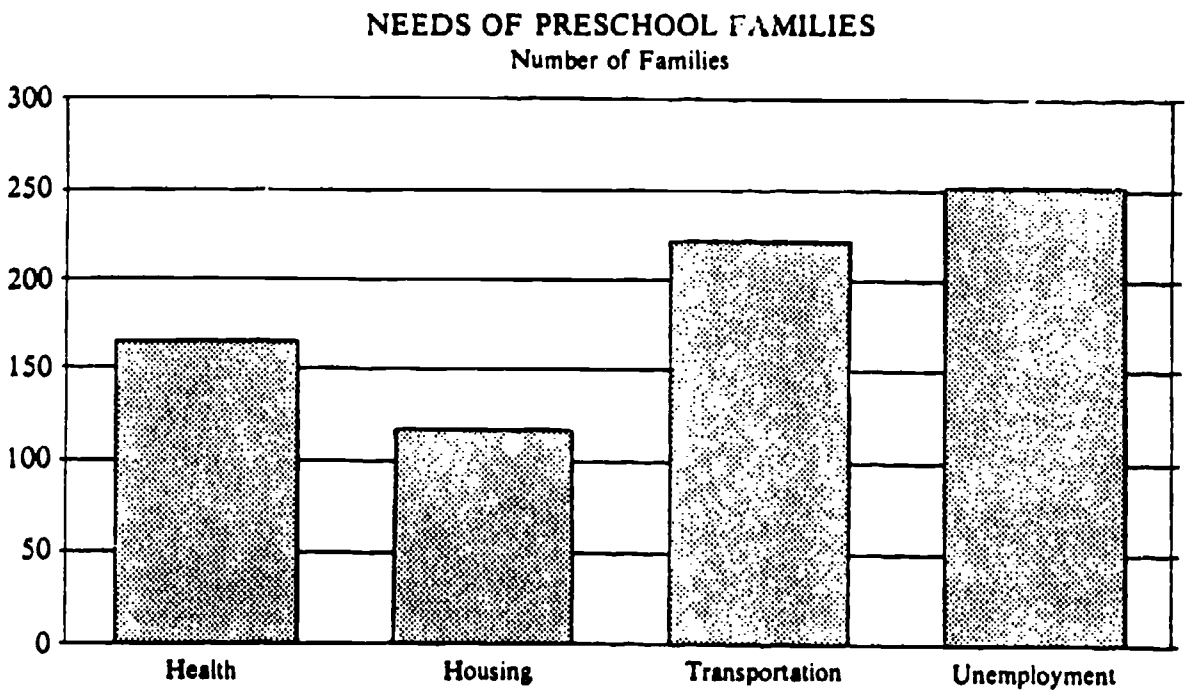


4. Households with 6 or more members (N=29).

5. Have mother who is a high school dropout or a single parent (N=13).

In addition to the clear financial needs of the families in the project, current needs as shown in Figure 5 were reported by families in the areas of transportation (220 families), health (161 families), unemployment (249 families), and housing (111 families).

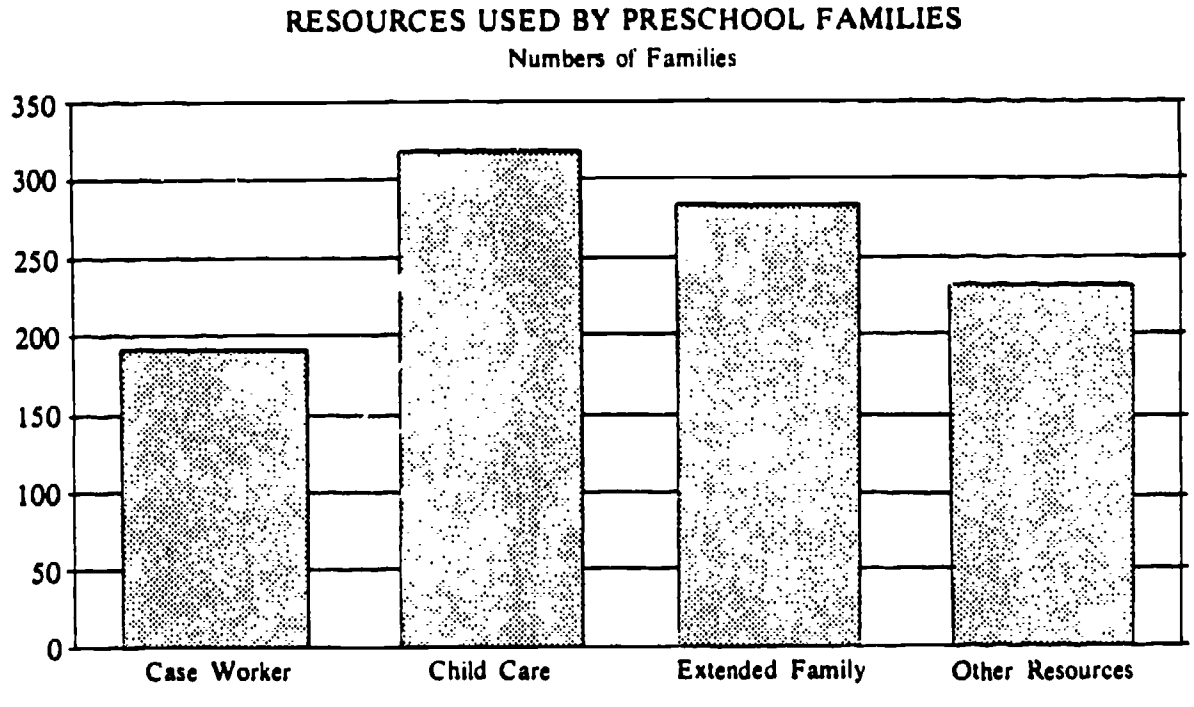
FIGURE 5



Community and state resources were also examined. Figure 6 presents an overview of the type of support/resources the families utilize. The families reported that they are receiving community help from extended family (16%), programs for child care (18%), case workers from a social agency (11%), and other sources (e.g., educational, financial, job-related, health, and recreational services).

The final factor examined was the language spoken in the home. Communication problems between home and school are more noted in bilingual homes and in homes where English is not spoken. In this sample 124 of the children are from homes where English is not spoken. Nearly one in four of the children live in homes

FIGURE 6.



where a non-English language is spoken as a primary language; in the majority of these homes, Spanish is spoken. The wide variety of languages can be seen in Table 3.

The survey results on all measures were studied to determine if differences exist between programs in rural and urban communities. Differences were found in addition to the ethnic composition of the programs discussed earlier. Transportation needs were surprisingly greater in the urban than in rural communities. Support from extended family networks was reported more in rural than in urban families. Both mothers and fathers in rural areas had on the average, less formal education than those in the urban areas.

The survey results were further studied to determine if differences existed in needs and resources among the four service delivery models. Major differences were found among the delivery systems as shown in Table 4. The sample served in Model D, the "innovative" category, is a population that showed greater needs in nearly all areas tapped in the survey.

TABLE 3

Languages in Homes of Preschool Children

Language	Number	Language	Number
Spanish	315	Navajo	2
Hmong	15	Polish	2
Chinese	7	Afrikaans	1
Arabic	6	Aicam	1
German	6	Greek	1
Japanese	4	Philippino	1
Korean	4	Portuguese	1
Vietnamese	4	Serbo Croat	1
Farsi	3	Thai	1
French	3	Yiddish	1
Sign Language	3	Urdu	1
Hindu	2	Yoruba	1
Indonesian	2	Zulu	1
Italian	2		

In summary, the evidence of high needs is based on income; ethnicity; language factors; and parental factors such as parents' age, education, and marital status. These families also demonstrate needs in the areas of health, housing, employment, and transportation. The children and families participating in the preschool project exhibit the characteristics of the at-risk population.

DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A theoretical framework is the foundation for an educational program. The theory or model of child development used determines the content (i.e. the curriculum) and the teaching methods of the program. However, a variety of factors such as qualifications of the staff, quality of the environment, support by the administration, etc., also affect the operation of a preschool program. In order to provide a complete picture of the Colorado Preschool Project the following program variables will be described: 1) Theoretical Model/Curriculum, 2) Schedules, 3) Staff and volunteers, 4) Facilities, 5) Transportation, and 6) Transition to Kindergarten.

TABLE 4

Demographic Information
by Service Delivery Model

Family Income	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Less than $12,000	40.6%	41.2%	25.4%	67.3%
$12,000 - 20,000	28.9%	29.5%	27.4%	18.7%
$20,000 - 35,000	20.9%	25.2%	31.3%	9.3%
• Over $35,000	9.6%	4.1%	15.9%	4.7%
Ethnic Minority Children	31.6%	60.6%	51.9%	69.1%
Transportation Problems	11.1%	10.3%	13.8%	23.1%
Health Problems	6.3%	8.8%	7.7%	27.6%
Unemployment	15.4%	14.3%	7.9%	31.4%
Housing Needs	5.3%	7.9%	3.6%	14.7%
Highest School Grade Completed				
mother:	12.1	12.0	12.8	10.7
father:	12.4	12.3	13.0	10.8

• The majority of children in this category live in foster homes or with relatives.

Theoretical Model/Curriculum

Educational programming should always be based on an understanding of how young children learn. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the quality of an early childhood program is determined by the degree to which the program is developmentally appropriate (1986). The interviews conducted with a sample of project staff from each district indicated that the majority of their preschool programs are based on two nationally recognized models, High Scope and INREAL. Both models exemplify the standards set by NAEYC. High Scope is used in

two thirds of the programs. INter REActive Learning (INREAL), a model that originated in Colorado, is used by about a quarter of the districts. Both models emphasize child-initiated, child-directed, active learning experiences to develop language, logical thinking, and reasoning abilities. The teacher's role is to facilitate and promote learning through conversation while children develop plans and initiate activities with materials. Preschool children learn language best with materials that they can use to build, explore, manipulate, pretend, and create.

Other models identified by sites were described as "eclectic models." In such models, a variety of components such as experiential learning, child-directed learning, language experience, and/or developmental activities were reported. The actual theoretical framework of these "eclectic models" seems to be unclear.

Observations in the classrooms indicated that districts were striving to implement developmentally-appropriate models. Despite the short time available to set up the programs, the classrooms looked inviting and comfortable. Some elements of High Scope and INREAL were present in most cases. All sites had centers within the classroom and offer free-choice time for children to select their activities. Classrooms offered a variety of learning opportunities for young children. Over all, the project staff were very positive about working in the programs. The interviewers frequently heard such comments as, "I like working with these kids."

There are some areas of concern that will need attention during the second year of the project. These areas are: 1) classroom environments, 2) developmental levels of activities, and 3) staff understanding of language development.

Classroom environments will need to be broadened and expanded so that materials and learning experiences available to the children truly facilitate their language, thinking, and problem solving skills. Although in many classrooms children were offered choice of centers, the activities in those centers were usually closed-ended. For example, children who select the art center were allowed to make only a cat from the materials given to them. An experience such as this does not allow the child to either choose or initiate the activity. One teacher acknowledged problems in this area. She said, "I don't always know what I should be doing with young children because my training didn't address this. I have an elementary background, but I'm trying." Teachers need to know how to better provide and organize materials and activities with which children can be imaginative and creative.

The second area of concern is with the developmental level of the activities. There were indications that many teachers were too concerned with getting children "ready" for kindergarten. For example, emphasis on the teaching of pre-academic skills such as writing their names, cutting out figures, learning letters and sounds while working in large groups is inappropriate for four-year-old children. Four-year-old children will learn these skills when they have the opportunity to explore and use materials through play. When children develop such skills and knowledge through self-directed activities, their individual differences are recognized, their learning is retained over time, and important life skills such as solving problems, taking initiative, and assuming responsibility for ones' learning are promoted. The team observed that teachers need to know how to monitor and guide each child's individual progress.

The final area of concern is related to the preschool staffs' understanding of language development. Recent research clearly indicates that talking conversationally with children about what they are doing, thinking, and feeling is the most effective method of supporting language growth. It is important, too, that children learn to use language to solve problems instead of only answering teachers' questions. In many classrooms, teachers were directive rather than conversational with the children, and the amount of teacher-talk far exceeded that of the preschoolers. Several staff members said, "We know we talk too much because our voices are tired." Teachers and paraprofessionals continue to need more information about how language develops and how this development can best be facilitated.

It was also observed that language development was being narrowly defined. The oral language components of vocabulary, grammar, and semantic relationships were heavily stressed; however, there was little evidence of any written language component. Oral and written language (literacy) develop in parallel fashion (Goodwin, 1984; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). Children learn how to read and write in the same way they learn to speak. They need to interact with printed language in developmentally meaningful ways. Teachers need more information about the relationship between oral and written language in order to facilitate their simultaneous development.

If the Colorado preschool programs use the standards for quality in early childhood set by NAEYC, they will provide the best language-development preschool experience. Administrators and teachers continue to need assistance in better understanding

developmentally appropriate activities and language development.

Providing a child-centered program with ongoing opportunities for experiential learning is a rigorous task. Continued staff development training will facilitate meeting these program concerns.

Schedules

On the average, children enrolled in the preschool programs attended class four days a week for approximately three hours per day. Seven of the 33 districts were opening extended day-services. In their zeal to provide programs full of experiences, teachers divided their sessions into 8-15 different activity times. Dividing the day into this many different blocks of time impedes a child's ability to truly master learning in any area. Quality of learning must be carefully considered in scheduling the preschool "day."

Staff

Colorado public schools are facing a new challenge to serve preschool children. In many geographic areas, this is the first time preschool services have been provided to at-risk children. The accomplishment of this task requires competent qualified staff.

Information about educational background and certification of preschool employees was requested from each preschool program. Information was received from 136 teachers, 81 paraprofessionals (aides), 31 administrators, 35 professional specialists, 9 coordinators, and 18 people with dual roles of administrator/teacher, specialist/teacher, or administrator/specialist.

Staff composition varied considerably by model of service delivery as shown in Table 5. Major differences between models were found in the ratio of teachers to paraprofessionals and in the numbers and roles of specialists and other support staff. For example, teacher-to-paraprofessional ratio varied from nearly 4 to 1 in Model C to about equal numbers in Model B. Model C provided the least, and Model D the most, in specialist services from professionals such as speech/language therapists, social workers, and psychologists. Model B classrooms had the most support staff in positions such as parent coordinator and teacher trainer.

TABLE 5

Staff Composition by Service Delivery Model

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Administrator	14.0%	10.2%	13.6%	14.7%
Teacher	47.1%	36.5%	61.4%	41.0%
Paraprofessional	25.6%	37.6%	15.9%	21.8%
Specialists and Support Staff	13.4%	15.6%	9.1%	22.4%

Differences among models in administrator qualifications are summarized in Table 6. The greatest difference was found in the amount of administrator training in early childhood education. This training ranged from none in Model A to 62% in Model C.

TABLE 6

Administrator Training by Service Delivery Model

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
State Certification (any type)	85%	40%	88%	75%
State Certification (early childhood)	0%	20%	62%	44%
Degree				
Masters or Ph.D.	46%	50%	25%	38%
Bachelors	38%	30%	50%	50%
Less than Bachelors	15%	20%	25%	12%

Classroom teachers are allowed to teach in preschools in Colorado if they meet one of the following criteria: 1) have certification from the Colorado Department of Education, 2) satisfy Colorado Department of Social Services requirements for preschool director or preschool group leader status, or 3) are hired to teach in Head Start

programs, usually after the completion of a Head Start inservice program.

Tables 7-9 represent the educational background and type of certification attained by the Colorado Preschool Project staffs. As indicated in Table 7, there is a wide disparity in educational background and certification of teachers with very few being state certified in early childhood education.

TABLE 7

Teacher Education and Certification

	Percent	Number
Highest Degree Completed		
Masters	11	16
Bachelors	54	79
Associates	14	21
High School	21	30
Highest Certification/Training		
Type B/E (Early Childhood)	3	4
Type A/E (Early Childhood)	13	19
Type B (Other)	5	8
Type A (Other)	19	28
Type D	1	1
Type E	3	5
Director Qualified	9	13
Group Leader Qualified	36	54
Head St[illegible] Training	9	14
None	2	3

Table 8 shows that [illegible]% of the paraprofessionals have formal education beyond high school, while the majority have at least a high school education.

TABLE 8

Paraprofessional Educational Background

	Percent	Number
Highest Degree Completed		
Bachelors	15	12
Associates	20	16
High School	64	51
Less than High School	1	1

According to the survey data in Table 9, specialists and support staff have the highest educational level, with over 85% having at least four years of education beyond high school. Few, however, have state certification in early childhood education.

TABLE 9

Specialist and Support Staff Training and Certification

	Percent	Number
Highest Degree Completed		
Masters	53.1	26
Bachelors	34.7	17
High School	10.2	5
No Response	2.0	1
Highest Certification/Training		
Type B (Early Childhood)	2.0	1
Type B (Other)	2.0	1
Type A (Other)	6.1	3
Type E	49.0	24
Head Start Training	2.0	1
None	38.8	19

An ongoing staff development program is essential to ensure quality early childhood program implementation. To support this effort the Colorado Department of Education

and the Clayton Foundation formed a partnership to provide training and technical assistance to the 33 school districts. Nineteen training workshops were available at no charge to preschool staff. Graduate credit from the University of Colorado was available for some of the workshops offered.

Teachers had other opportunities for training, as well. National and state conferences were attended by staff from seven districts. A few teachers elected to participate in in-depth training of models such as High Scope and INREAL. Local school districts also offered inservice workshops. The availability of district inservices appeared to be directly linked with the location of the preschool programs. Preschool personnel housed in elementary schools began to be viewed as part of the elementary school faculty, and thus were included in school inservice activities.

The program interviewers identified staff development needs. Areas of need include: 1) classroom implementation of High Scope, 2) parental involvement at all levels, 3) development and facilitation of language, 4) screening procedures, 5) multicultural seminars, 6) cognitive development, 7) working with dysfunctional families and 8) building teams. Staff overwhelmingly requested the availability of model sites open for observation.

Classroom Volunteers

Preschools were requested to return brief forms showing numbers and types of volunteers in their programs. Information was returned from 208 classroom volunteers. The majority (78%) of the volunteers were parents of the children in the program. Other volunteers were grandparents, neighbors, and students from elementary and secondary schools.

Facilities

As can be seen in Table 10 approximately one half of the sites (52%) have been physically integrated into the elementary schools. Head Start facilities have provided locations for 17% of the sites. The remaining sites were located in private preschools/day cares, homes or other community buildings.

Generally speaking, project personnel felt positive about the facilities and believed that their individual facility was adequate for the program. A common description from

TABLE 10

Facilities Housing CPP Sites

	Elementary School	Head Start	Private Preschool	Private Day Care	Church	Homes	Other
Number of Classrooms	48	16	8	7	3	3	7
Percentage of Classrooms	52.1%	17.3%	8.7%	7.6%	3.2%	3.2%	7.6%

teachers was, "We have space, but we need to organize it with materials." However, some staff reported not having access to water or restrooms within the classroom setting. Many sites also lacked playground equipment or had no access to equipment that was the appropriate size for preschool children. It would have been helpful if start-up monies for materials and equipment had been available, prior to the count.

The physical location of the project did seem to have an impact on the program beyond the physical aspects of housing. Projects located in elementary schools were more fully integrated within the district. For example, in one district the principal announced, "The district now considers their educational responsibility to be from preschool through high school, rather than from kindergarten through high school." In this district and in some others, the preschool teachers were viewed as part of the elementary school faculty with equal privileges and responsibilities. This led to increased opportunities for program integration, staff development, and parent involvement. On the other hand, programs that were not located within elementary schools reported that they feel less supported and had fewer opportunities to work with other district programs.

Transportation

Transportation of children to and from the preschool was provided by seven of the 33 programs. Nineteen required that parents provide transportation and in seven programs a combination of parents and district transportation was used.

The types of transportation used within the districts had mixed effects on parent contact and school attendance. On the positive side, requiring parents to transport their own children promoted ongoing contact between parents and preschool staff. Parents were present at the program on a regular basis. As one parent stated during the interview, "I like to come in and see the kids at work or stay in the hallway and watch." This time also provided an opportunity for parents to get to know each other and to share on an informal basis. An elementary principal stated, "More parents are in the school than ever before and many of these parents are already actively involved in school activities." This principal strongly felt that the frequent time spent in the school was building trust as well as positive feelings about education.

On the negative side, parents' difficulty in providing transportation may have affected attendance. One father in the interview expressed this concern, "I know a family whose child needs the program, but wouldn't admit they don't have the money to transport." Program staff expressed concern about this problem. In other districts where busing was available, transportation costs were part of the preschool program budget. Since these district transportation costs were a major percentage of the budget, funding for materials and staff was then limited. Most importantly, children in need have been not be able to participate because of the issues surrounding transportation. District administrators need to carefully consider this issue when making decisions regarding transportation.

Transition to Kindergarten

One of the goals of the preschool programs is to help children and parents establish comfortable, positive feelings about schools. Data indicated that 95-98% of the preschool children were eligible for kindergarten in the fall. Facilitating the transition of children from the preschool program into kindergarten is important. Transition activities include the following: 1) providing assistance to parents, 2) providing information to receiving teachers and schools, and 3) preparing students.

The preschool programs provided assistance to parents in a variety of ways. End-of-the-year conferences set the stage for the transition into kindergarten. Many districts invited parents to observe the kindergarten classrooms and to meet the kindergarten teachers. A mother said, "Once I met his kindergarten teacher, I felt better." Parent

meetings were available at individual schools to provide orientation information. One district had an individual conference for each child with the preschool teacher, kindergarten teacher, parents, and school principal in attendance. Traditional kindergarten "round ups" occurred in 50% of the districts. District staff also sent written information to parents to describe enrollment procedures and were available, if necessary, to help parents complete forms.

At least one-third of the preschool programs made some kind of contact with the schools that the children will be attending in the fall. Letters were mailed to school principals notifying them of the children who will be enrolled in their school. Personal contacts were made with kindergarten teachers. Some districts sent individual files on children to the receiving school. Follow-up phone calls were made with both principals and teachers. One program invited kindergarten teachers to come and observe the preschool program.

Several school districts addressed transition from a more global perspective. They attempted to provide a consistent, developmentally appropriate framework for early childhood education, preschool through second grade. One district has made a commitment to a "whole language" approach in language arts, grades kindergarten through high school. Another district is training kindergarten teachers in the High Scope model.

Students were also prepared for the transition by visiting the elementary school, touring the building, and meeting with teachers. Several programs used the elementary school library, playground, etc., throughout the year to help preschoolers feel comfortable there. In some programs, preschool children ate lunch in the school cafeteria. Many programs integrated learning experiences with kindergarten classes where children play together on the playground and in physical education. Some programs have invited older elementary students to be "buddies" and to volunteer in the preschool classroom. A preschool child riding the bus was overheard saying, "There's my friend, Joey, from third grade." Physical integration into the elementary building certainly assisted in the transition process.

Although transition from preschool to kindergarten was addressed by most programs to some degree, preschool staff want to increase this component next year. Again the short duration of the program this year placed limitations on the activities that

could be planned, coordinated, and completed. A common complaint from preschool staff was, "There wasn't enough time to do what we wanted." Parents also commented, "I just started to get involved and then school was over."

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Involvement of parents in the preschool program is one of the primary goals of the Colorado Preschool Project. Children who come from homes that value education and support school efforts are more likely to be successful and to complete their education. Improved understanding and communication between home and school is a means of facilitating immediate cooperation between the school and the family. Parent involvement in the preschool programs can be divided into the three categories: of 1) conferences/contacts, 2) classroom volunteers, and 3) parent education opportunities. All programs conducted formal and informal conferences with parents throughout the duration of the program. Parents were invited to observe classrooms. One parent told the teachers, "It's always so much fun to be in the classroom and just watch the kids. I never really had an opportunity to be involved with my other children when they started school; I wish I had felt as welcomed and included as I do at Jamie's school." Informal contacts occurred on an ongoing basis in programs where parents were responsible for bringing their children to and from preschool. During the interviews, parents stated that these contacts were one of the most positive aspects of the program. Parents also identified home visits as another positive contact opportunity between home and school. One parent shared, "When the teacher comes to our home, I feel like I'm really included not just sitting on the side-line watching." Because of the strong parent feedback about home visits, staff from many programs intend to increase them in the fall. One family said, "We didn't like filling out the forms and answering the questions by ourselves; it seemed easier in person." It appeared that the frequent contact between parents and teachers greatly enhanced communication between home and school. Conferencing also played an important role in the transition between preschool and kindergarten.

A second way of involving parents in the preschool was to encourage them to become directly involved in classroom activities. Unfortunately, many staffs limited parent participation to responsibility for supplying snacks, arranging parties, and

accompanying classes on field trips. In approximately one quarter of the programs parents worked as volunteers in the classroom, assisting in all classroom activities. In one program, parents participated as "teachers." Minority parents shared parts of their culture with the class. A father said, "I didn't feel it was routine. They really seemed to want me to visit." Another parent started a music time using different instruments with the children. Parents who participated in the classroom felt as though they were respected and valued by the preschool staff. Parents in the interviews acknowledged that not all parents felt they had something to share and needed support in seeing their worth. Parents also supported the programs by supplying materials, working in fund-raising efforts, and providing their skills in renovating program facilities.

Parent education opportunity was the third category of parent involvement. Over two-thirds of the programs had some type of parent meeting(s). For many, this entailed an orientation to the preschool program. Other meetings centered on special topics. Ten programs offered parenting classes, one of which was instructed by a parent. Parents were given free credit to take classes at four community colleges. Sites also began developing libraries of books, tapes, and videos on topics of interest to parents. One mother said, "There was so much to do, I couldn't decide." As a result of educational opportunities offered through the preschool one parent decided to go back to school. She said, "I'm going back to school myself because of the teacher's encouragement."

Most programs indicated that increased parent involvement is a goal for the next year of the project. Increased linkage between families and community resources needs to occur. Parental involvement will be encouraged by providing parents with a variety of options. Parent-professional partnerships are a relatively new facet in educational programing. Support will be needed to develop these relationships.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluation of preschool program effectiveness is still in the planning stages. To evaluate the effectiveness of an educational program, multiple factors should be taken into consideration. In the past, child progress has been the primary focus of program evaluation. To determine if preschool programs are achieving their goals,

additional components such as how teachers develop new skills, organization of classroom environments, parent satisfaction, and interagency collaboration must be examined.

According to the survey, child progress data were collected. Pre-post testing with language instruments was the primary type of child data collected. Pre- and post-language samples were also collected to document child language growth. Several programs have maintained anecdotal records on the preschoolers' progress. In other programs, learner outcomes were documented from individual child plans. Documentation of attendance was collected in another program. A few of the programs used the Child Observation Record from High Scope to record daily achievement. In one program identification numbers were assigned to the children to be used for following these children as they go into the elementary schools.

One district's staff contracted with a university to conduct an external evaluation of its preschool program. Components to be investigated included: program attendance, learner outcomes, family service plans, indices of parent involvement, and parent satisfaction.

Data on parent involvement or parent satisfaction was not widely collected by program staff. In one program a count of number and type of parent contacts was kept. Some staff members suggested that an exit interview and a parent survey would provide useful information.

Another change that was suggested for program evaluation is the development of naturalistic child assessment procedures. One program's staff wishes to investigate the use of video tapes to document child growth rather than relying on standardized tests. Technical assistance for program evaluation in all areas was requested by program staff during the interviews.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Research has clearly documented the wide-ranging benefits of preschool education for individuals as well as for society. Early childhood education increases the likelihood of success and employability, and reduces the need for public assistance. The Colorado Preschool Project has been funded to assist in decreasing the number of

students placed at risk of educational failure in this state. The purpose of this project is to provide preschool programs for four and five year-old children in need of assistance for language development, and to encourage parent participation. These preschool programs were piloted by 33 districts in Colorado from January to June, 1989.

The purpose of this report is to describe how the Colorado Preschool programs have progressed. The progress report team reviewed all data provided by the participating school districts. The team visited 28 of the sites and conducted a group interview with project administrators, staff, and parents at all sites. During the group interview, project personnel and parents were asked to identify the benefits and needs of their program. They were also asked to make recommendations regarding the Colorado Preschool Project. From the group interviews, the on-site visitations, and other data, strengths, needs, and recommendations were also identified by the progress report team. In conclusion, the benefits and needs of the Colorado Preschool Project as well as recommendations regarding the project will be described as observed by the preschool program staffs, families, and the progress report team.

Benefits of the Colorado Preschool Project

Preschool Staffs

- Parents are supportive and enthusiastic about the preschools.
- Visits by teachers to the homes are creating positive school/home relationships.
- Children have shown gains in their communication skills and are becoming more independent learners.
- The smaller class sizes have greatly facilitated the children's progress.
- Preschool education is beginning to be accepted and supported by school districts as a part of the school district program, particularly where preschools are located in elementary schools.

Report Team

- The children/families served display the needs associated with risk of educational failure.
- State, county and local agencies are beginning to work together to provide services to children and families.
- Community awareness and support of the preschool program and its importance is increasing.
- Programs are based on nationally recognized models of quality early childhood education.
- Preschool staffs are becoming aware of the importance of working with families.
- Program staffs are working to provide quality preschools.

Needs of the Colorado Preschool Project

Preschool Staffs

- Flexible work schedules are necessary to increase the number of visits made to the children's homes.
- Parent involvement in the classrooms needs to increase.
- Ongoing staff development in the areas of child development and working with families is needed to improve staff expertise.
- More classroom materials are needed to facilitate child-directed and child-initiated learning.
- Programs need to be located in elementary schools or buildings with other preschool programs to increase opportunities for both children and staff to interact with peers.

Report Team

- Advisory councils must begin to meet with program staff on a regular basis to become a functioning component of the program.
- Guidelines regarding program eligibility need to be clarified.
- Preschool staff need to view families as equal partners who make significant contributions to the preschool program.
- Preschool teachers need to increase their understanding of how to work with families.
- Programs must provide more child-directed, child-centered learning experiences.
- Transportation issues must be reviewed and resolved.

Recommendations

Parents and Colorado Preschool Project educators applaud the efforts of the Colorado legislators in creating this project for at-risk preschool children. They would like to see this interest continued and expanded. In this vein, the following recommendations have been made:

Preschool Staffs

- Maintain flexible eligibility criteria so that children with a variety of risk factors can be served.
- Integrate preschool programs so that students do not become "labeled" or stigmatized.
- Provide sufficient funding for the program to be fully implemented.
- Expand the number of programs to serve more children.

Report Team

- Establish and maintain preschool programs based on NAEYC standards.
- Maintain flexible criteria for eligibility so that a variety of risk factors can be considered, but provide clarification regarding these criteria.
- Encourage integration of programs with other early education services to children and families.
- Continue staff development training opportunities to assure well qualified early educators.
- Identify exemplary sites that can be observed by other educators and others interested in quality preschools.
- Provide sufficient funding for program to be fully implemented.
- Track the progress of students/ families through school to study the meaningful effects of the program.

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